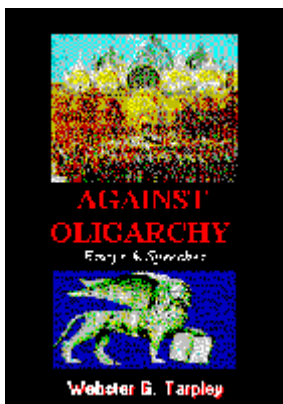


## British Coup d'Etat In Washington, April 12, 1945: How The Harriman Gang Started The Cold War « TARPLEY.net

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To those whose adult lives and historical experience have been largely dominated by the Soviet-American rivalry, by the division of the world into the opposed military blocs of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and by the Cold War, the idea that the fundamental interests of the United States and Russia are necessarily in conflict may appear as self-evident, and the clash of these two powers may seem inevitable. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. The legitimate national interests of American and Russia are not in conflict. Russia supported the American Revolution through the anti-British League of Armed Neutrality, and Tsar Alexander II was Lincoln's only ally during the US Civil War. America, in turn, was the only power friendly to Russia during the British onslaught of the Crimean War.

Up until the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 12, 1945, a Soviet-American clash would have been considered by most informed observers as less likely than other outcomes. FDR's design for the postwar world can be summed up under three headings:

1. The unity and cooperation of the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United Kingdom – the Big Three – as the content for the United Nations. The essence of Roosevelt's views on the US-USSR-UK relationship was included in the Yalta declaration: "Only with the continuing and growing cooperation and understanding among our three countries and among all the peace-loving nations can...be realized a secure and lasting peace...." Roosevelt intended to hold summits with Moscow and London about once a year, with continuous consultation in the interims at the foreign minister level.
2. The dismantling of the colonial empires, which were to be supplanted by sovereign states. At Yalta, Roosevelt asked Gen. Patrick Hurley to draw up a plan for safeguarding the independence and sovereignty of Iran. After Yalta, FDR – despite the fact that he was a very sick man – took time to meet with King Farouk of Egypt, King Saud of Saudi Arabia, and Haile Selassie of Ethiopia – meetings which the British interpreted as harbingers of a strong anti-colonial, anti-imperial thrust in postwar US policy. FDR, in conversations with Churchill, had rejected the latter's "eighteenth century methods."
3. Economic development, as exemplified by the proposal FDR made at Yalta to develop the entire Danube River basin according to the methods of the highly successful Tennessee Valley Authority.

The coming of the Cold War was experienced by well-informed Americans as a stunning reversal, a breathtaking change of course, as the abrupt jettisoning of the principles which had guided FDR's wartime planning for the postwar international scene. In the wake of the October 1995 summit of Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin at FDR's home in Hyde Park, New York, and in view of the manifest intent of the two presidents to return to the quality of cooperation that was within reach for Americans and Russians in 1945, it is highly instructive to review how half a century of needless and useless Cold War conflict was foisted onto the world.

The roots of the Cold War lie not in any irrepressible American-Russian antagonism, but far more in British geopolitics and British balance of power machinations. These impulses were expressed in 1945 by the British Establishment and especially by the clique around British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, including most notably Ambassador W. Averell Harriman and his henchmen. As a general rule, very little of that which happened after April 12, 1945 would have happened if Roosevelt had still been alive and in command. Roosevelt's death in Warm Springs, Georgia was a golden opportunity for the British, and they seized it with both hands.

FDR saw the three-way cooperation among Washington, Moscow, and London as the path to a more peaceful future. There were certainly plenty of suspicions in Moscow and in the mind of Stalin personally about the advisability of such a course – suspicions rooted in the “Moscow the Third Rome” cultural matrix and its Bolshevik overlay. But these difficulties were on the whole less formidable than the raving, implacable hostility which FDR's perspective excited in London. The British oligarchy, steeped in Venetian geopolitics, saw in FDR's proposal for big-power cooperation in the postwar years nothing less than their own extinction. In such a three-cornered world, London would be the weak sister, the low man on the totem pole. The British Establishment abhorred such a fate – their cultural matrix was the idea that the British Empire had to be the deciding factor in human affairs, come hell or high water. Or, as Sir Anthony Eden told John Foster Dulles in 1956, Britain would rather have the third world war, fought with nuclear weapons, than become a third-rate power with a shattered economy.

### Big Three Unity



**Yalta Conference, 1945** — seated: Churchill, Roosevelt, & Stalin standing: Harriman and Molotov (2nd & 3rd from right, respectively)

As the great continental expanses of Russian and America were enriched by economic cooperation, consultation a trois would gradually be supplanted by the de facto a deux relation of Washington and Moscow – as later parlance had it, the superpowers. If US relations with the USSR remained good, then the US would of course assist Soviet postwar economic reconstruction. That reconstruction would be extended to the war-ravaged areas of Eastern Europe – to Poland, to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, to the Balkan and Danubian states. Economic development in Eastern Europe along the lines FDR proposed at Yalta would violate one of the most basic precepts of British geopolitics, the British even more isolated, irrelevant, impoverished and impotent than they already were. If the US and the USSR were able to get along, London would rapidly have become an antiquated third wheel, a museum of the gothic horrors of 18th century colonialism.

The British could of course have chosen to rebuild their own economy, and that of their imperial satellites – especially their own great continental expanses of Canada and Australia. But this is precisely the alternative which the British oligarchy is organized to reject and has historically rejected.

But if conflict between the US and the USSR could be engineered, then London would suddenly become very important indeed. Washington, needing an advanced base to counter Soviet designs in Europe, would discover a desperate reliance on British cooperation. British networks among the political leaders of the continental states would become indispensable. In any alliance of the north Atlantic powers against the USSR, London would attain paramount status among the European members. London could extort all manner of concessions from the US – economic aid, assistance in fighting colonial wars to preserve the British Empire and its sister empires, and so forth. At certain moments, London could pose as a mediator between US and USSR. Perfide Albion would also be in a position to deal under the table with Moscow in the way that later occurred through the Philby-Maclean-Burgess-Blunt-Lord Victor Rothschild-Sir Lester Pearson networks of triple agents ultimately loyal to London.

### **Churchill's Lepidus Complex**

For three centuries, the British had tried to dominate Europe and the world through the balance of power. In 1945, instead of being the protagonists of the balancing act, they saw themselves as being balanced, played off against the USSR by FDR. Churchill was always reluctant to hear the allies described as “the Big Three” by Eden or others. At Harrow, Churchill had learned of the second triumvirate of the Roman Republic, with Marc Anthony (lord of the east), Octavian (later Augustus) and M. Aemilius Lepidus. Now, if FDR was Augustus and Stalin was Marc Anthony, Churchill knew that the British would be forced to play the role of the inconsequential Lepidus, the virtual servant of the other two. The British Establishment rebelled against this fate.

### **Churchill The Provocateur**

By the autumn of 1944, the final defeat of Germany was clearly not far off. Churchill gave increasing thought to sabotaging FDR's grand design for the postwar world. During the war, Churchill had delayed, sabotaged, and crippled allied strategy with his lunatic plans for an invasion of Europe through the “soft underbelly” of the Balkans, or for “a campaign across the Indian Ocean” when MacArthur was within striking distance of Manila. As World War II in Europe moved towards its end, Churchill began to scheme for ways to provoke a clash between the US and the USSR.



Churchill and Stalin

The first step was to re-assert a British sphere of influence in the Balkans on the basis of virtually nothing, since the entire area, except for Greece, was occupied or about to be occupied by the Red Army. This was Churchill's mission on his infamous “Tolstoi” solo trip to Moscow in October, 1944. At a meeting with Stalin in the Kremlin, Churchill advanced his “naughty document” giving Moscow and London percentages of control in the Balkans, as if these countries had been targets of a leveraged buy-out. Churchill proposed:

Let us settle our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Roumania and Bulgaria...Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Roumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?

Churchill offered Stalin 75% of Bulgaria as well. He claimed that Stalin made a check mark opposite these figures.

In Greece, Churchill gave Stalin an object lesson of what "influence" meant. German forces left Greece in October, 1944. Effective control of the country outside of Athens passed into the hands of the EAM-ELAS communist guerillas. Churchill rushed in British troops, with the goal of restoring the monarchy of King George II and a court of Nazi collaborators.

In one of his most infamous dispatches, Churchill told the British commander, Gen. Scobie, to treat Athens like "a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress." Scobie was instructed not to hesitate to provoke a bloodbath. The British soon made clear that their first priority was the disarming of the communist guerillas. On December 3, 1944 EAM-ELAS staged a demonstration in Athens to show its vast support. The British forces opened fire, and fighting raged in Athens.

To suppress EAM-ELAS, Churchill insisted on withdrawing British forces from nearby Italy, where a real war was still being fought, and shipping them over to Athens. When he tried to commandeer US troop transports, US Admiral King overrode him with an order that no American ships would be used to ferry Churchill's soldatesca and supplies to Greece. The Stettinius State Department expressed indignation about this British atrocity, and followed up with a rebuff to London for attempting to dictate the internal arrangements in Italy. Congressmen took turns excoriating Scobie. The British Embassy in Washington cabled London that "suspicion of British despotism in Europe is now thoroughly awakened." [Charmley, p. 597] Hopkins told Churchill that "public opinion here has rapidly deteriorated" towards the British.

By the end of the year, Americans were more upset by the British crackdown in Greece than by the actions of the USSR in Poland. This, at least, was the finding of a public opinion poll cited to FDR by Secretary of State Stettinius in December, 1944. This poll showed that "Americans distrusted Britain more than they did Russia." [Gaddis, p. 155]

The Greek explosion had severely discredited the British in US eyes. In December, 1944 it seemed that the split might be US-USSR against UK. By his brutality in Athens, Churchill had set a standard of behavior against communists which many in the Soviet bureaucracy would claim for their own dealings with pro-British elements not just in Romania and Bulgaria, but in Poland as well. That would make Poland into a showcase of Soviet brutality, and the results could be played back into the US political situation.

## **Poland**

By the end of the war, there were two Polish governments in exile. One was a group of Soviet assets who were soon to take on the name of the Lublin Poles. There was also a Polish government in exile based in London, in which British assets were heavily represented. The prime minister of the London Polish government in exile had been Gen. Sikorski, but his plane had crashed when taking off from the British air base at Gibraltar in 1943; there was grave suspicion that Gen. Sikorski had really been assassinated on orders from Churchill.

It surprised nobody that, at the Yalta conference, London and Moscow each demanded that their assets become the sole government of Poland. FDR proposed the compromise that "the present Polish Provisional Government [Lublin] be reorganized into a fully representative government based on all democratic forces in Poland and including democratic leaders from Poland abroad." This American suggestion clearly meant that the London committee was not the exclusive representative of the Polish nation. The American view was reflected in the final Yalta agreement: "The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should...be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad. This new Government should then be called the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity." [Gaddis, p. 163]

Exactly what this meant in practice became the subject of acrimonious controversy in the months to come. In the event, the prime minister of the London committee became in June the deputy prime minister of the government in Warsaw. At Yalta, FDR had pressed Stalin for free elections in Poland at the earliest possible date. The elections, FDR had specified, should be "beyond question", "like Caesar's wife." When elections were held in 1946, the Soviets stuffed the ballot boxes in favor of their assets, but by then the Cold War had taken on a life of its own.

One commentary on whether or not Stalin had kept his Yalta commitments regarding Poland came from the pro-Russian US diplomat Joseph E. Davies, who says that James F. Byrnes told him on June 6, 1945 that "there was no intent [at Yalta] that a new government was to be created independent of the Lublin government...There was no justification under the spirit or the letter of the agreement for insistence by Harriman and the British Ambassador that an entirely new Government should be created." [Gaddis, p. 162]

FDR was aware that after World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Polish-Russian war, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and Operation Barbarossa, there were no ideal alternatives left for Poland. The Red Army was in possession of the country, and nothing but World War III could change that – a World War III that would hurt the Poles more than anyone else. The US and UK official position had been that Polish borders had to be flexible, but that there should be free elections. Stalin

insisted on a Polish government friendly to the USSR. The problem was that in Poland, a freely elected government would be an anti-Soviet government. There was no solution that would satisfy the Poles and the Big Three.

FDR's 1943 maxim had been that "as far as Poland is concerned, the important thing is to set it up in a way that will help maintain the peace of the world." [Gaddis, p. 135] FDR's hope had been that Big Three unity and economic reconstruction would mean much more to Soviet security in the atomic age than spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and predominance over Polish internal affairs. FDR knew how imperfect this answer was, but, as he told Admiral Leahy after Yalta, this was "the best I can do for Poland at this time." [Gaddis, p. 163]

Today, after the end of the Cold War, there are grounds to argue that FDR's alternative would have been better for Poland than the Churchill-Harriman Cold War option. If the division of Europe into blocs could have been avoided, Poland and Eastern Europe could have participated in the original Marshal Plan. The USSR could have imported capital goods from the west, and the primitive accumulation against the Warsaw Pact states could have been limited. Totalitarian police-state structures might have been less appealing to Moscow policy makers. Economic conditions would have worked in favor of detente, and east-west confrontation could have been kept to a minimum. Under these assumptions, the thaw of the postwar Soviet system could have come during the mid-1950s, rather than the late 1980s.

During the last weeks of the war in Europe, Churchill tried to convince the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe Gen. Eisenhower that it was a mistake to halt at the Elbe River in central Germany. Churchill wanted Ike to make a grab for the German capital, Berlin. Ike had been concerned about the coming moment when the Anglo-Americans and the Red Army would meet. He wanted to avoid any inadvertent clashes or other difficulties. This danger meant nothing to Churchill. Ike also knew that he might be counterattacked, and might suffer needless losses.

Ike had the good sense to reject Churchill's harebrained scheming. He also took the precaution of removing the US Ninth Army from British Field Marshal Montgomery's command and put it back under the control of US Gen. Omar Bradley, who would use it for a thrust towards Leipzig. This meant that Montgomery would not have the troops to make a stab at Berlin on his own. Ike cabled these dispositions to Moscow, with which he was trying to stay in contact to avoid misunderstandings. The British military command went ballistic.

The decision to stop at the Elbe left US forces deep within the occupation zone which the Soviets had been assigned. On April 18, Churchill suggested that Eisenhower's men not withdraw from their forward positions unless Stalin delivered concessions. The most charitable interpretation of this is that Churchill wanted to use Thuringia and related areas as a bargaining chip with Moscow. By May 12, Churchill was already talking about an "iron curtain" in Central Europe. London insisted that no withdrawals take place until "the whole question of the future relation of the two Governments [US and UK] with the Soviet Government in Europe had been resolved." The US government unanimously rejected this ploy.

## **Harriman**

Churchill's provocations had fallen short of what the British required. Enter Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, the US envoy to Moscow. Harriman was the heir to the E.J. Harriman fortune (which had been sponsored by King Edward VII), and was the dominant force along with Prescott Bush and Robert Lovett in the Brown Brothers, Harriman Bank. Harriman was a raving Anglophile and true believer in the Anglo-Saxon Master Race. FDR had sent Harriman to London as Lend-Lease expediter. During that sojourn, Harriman had become virtually a member of the Churchill family, including a love affair with Pamela Digby Churchill, the wife of Sir Winston's dipsomaniac son, Randolph.

Later Soviet officialdom portrayed Harriman as a true friend of the USSR. In reality, the Russian people never had a more deadly enemy, whenever east-west conflict suited the needs of the British. Harriman contributed more to setting the Cold War into motion than any other single person.

After Yalta, Harriman used every available opportunity to create US-Soviet conflict. In April, 1945 SS General Karl Wolf attempted to negotiate a surrender of German forces fighting on the Italian front. When Harriman told Molotov about these talks, the Soviet side demanded to send a representative to Bern, Switzerland to participate. Otherwise the negotiations should be terminated, Molotov added. For the Soviets, the issue raised by the Italian front surrender was their own nightmare of a separate peace between the western allies and Germany that would allow the Wehrmacht to fight on in the east.

Harriman used this occasion to generate cable traffic with Washington to propagandize his anti-Soviet, and pro-British views. Harriman cabled to his close associate Gen. George C. Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, that the Soviets were showing "a domineering attitude toward the United States which we have before only suspected. It has been my feeling that sooner or later this attitude would create a situation which would be intolerable to us." [Abramson, p. 393]

There was a bitter exchange of cables between FDR and Stalin on this subject. But FDR cabled to the Soviet leader on April 5: "It would be one of the great tragedies of history if at the very moment of the victory, now within our grasp, such distrust, such lack of faith should prejudice the entire undertaking after the colossal losses of life, material and treasure involved. Frankly I cannot avoid a feeling of bitter resentment toward your informers, whoever they are, of such vile misrepresentations of my actions or those of my trusted subordinates." [Abramson, 394]

On the day of his death, in what appears to have been the last political action he took on this earth, FDR repudiated Harriman. He sent Stalin a conciliatory cable from Warm Springs in which he dismissed the Italian "secret surrender" controversy as a "minor misunderstanding" between Moscow and Washington. This enraged Harriman, who wanted as much mileage out of the incident as he could get. He refused to deliver FDR's cable to the Kremlin, but rather held it back. He sent a cable to FDR with the following ploy: "In the event you are willing to reconsider the wording of your message, may I respectfully suggest that the word 'minor' as a qualification of 'misunderstanding' be eliminated. The use of the word 'minor' might well be misinterpreted here. I must confess that the misunderstanding appeared to me to be of a major character." FDR's reply showed that he was well aware of the game that Harriman was playing for London: "I do not wish to delete the word 'minor,' as it is my desire to consider the Bern misunderstanding a minor incident." [see Abramson]

This was FDR's overall policy, as he summed it up in a letter he wrote personally for Churchill on April 11, which marks his final recorded view of Stalin:

I would minimize the general Soviet problem as much as possible because these problems, in one form or another, seem to arise every day and most of them straighten out as in the case of the Bern meeting. We must be firm, however, and our course thus far is correct. [Friedel, p. 602]

FDR knew Stalin, Molotov, and the other Soviet leaders well enough to know that they were not a humanitarian society. He knew of Stalin's butchery of Russians, Ukrainians, and others. He was aware of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and what had gone into it. Nevertheless, FDR had to be a realist. Given the reality of Stalin's Soviet Union, would it be confrontation or cooperation? FDR chose cooperation, and the hope of partnership.

During the weeks leading up to FDR's death, Harriman had made two separate attempts to return to Washington in order to give the President his patented "Stalin can't be trusted" anti-Soviet briefing. Twice FDR had made sure that the State Department refused. He simply didn't want to hear it. As soon as Harriman got the news that Roosevelt was dead, he fired off a cable to the State Department with his third request to return to Washington. This request, too, was turned down. Harriman's presence was required in Moscow.

According to Elliott Roosevelt, Stalin was convinced that FDR had been poisoned by "the Churchill gang," whom he also accused of having attempted to poison himself, Stalin. According to this account, Stalin had wanted Gromyko to inspect FDR's body for evidence of poisoning, but had, to his great anger, been denied the opportunity by Eleanor Roosevelt. [Parade Magazine, Feb. 9, 1986] Stalin's reaction to events following FDR's death must be read through this lens, and to his probable surmise that whoever succeeded FDR as president would be a tool of FDR's assassins.

Early on April 13, Harriman met with Stalin, who wanted to know every detail possible about how FDR had died. Harriman launched a successful ploy to get what he wanted – the chance to assume personal control of Harry Truman. Harriman hinted to Stalin that if Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov were to go to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, Molotov could also go to Washington to size up the new US president and learn his intentions towards the USSR. Stalin agreed to this proposal. Harriman further put a US aircraft at Molotov's disposal for the trip. With Molotov now going to the US, the protocol of the situation was now changed; it was usual for an ambassador to accompany a foreign minister on a visit to the ambassador's home country. The State Department now gave Harriman permission to come to Washington.

Although he was in a hurry to leave, Harriman still found time for a Parthian shot against Stalin. He raised the question of US airmen held by Stalin at Poltava. This led to a clash, much to the dismay of Gen. Patrick Hurley, an FDR loyalist. "On the way back to Spaso House, Hurley exclaimed that he had been afraid Harriman would come to blows with Stalin during their contretemps over the grounding of the Poltava airmen. [Harriman, p. 446] Such fisticuffs would have delighted Churchill.

## **Who Was Harry S. Truman**

Truman had served in the US field artillery in France during World War I, and had attempted a career as a haberdasher. In this he had gone bankrupt. He then fell in with the Pendergast machine, at that time the dominant force in Missouri politics. Truman was a freemasonic activist, and a member of the Ku Klux Klan. His patron Pendergast had been indicted for corruption by J. Edgar Hoover in 1939, and had been sentenced to three years in jail. Truman always knew that he too could be thrown in jail. During his career as a senator, Truman's chaired a committee that investigated corruption among



defense contractors. Truman's targets were prominent figures in the US military-industrial complex, which the British wanted to keep under control as much as possible.

Truman was subject to violent fits of rage, one of which became public when he threatened assault and battery against a Washington Post music critic who had written an unfavorable review of a concert by his daughter, Margaret Truman, an aspiring opera singer. Truman displayed pedantic pride in reeling off names from ancient history, including:

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the Great Prophets of Israel. Hammurabi the great Sumerian law-giver, Solon, Lycurgus, Aristides, Cyrus the Great, Darius the Great, Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, the Great Mogul, Saladin, Suleiman the Magnificent, Charles Martel, Charlemagne, Napoleon to name a few. [Ferrell, p. 294]

Truman called the White House "the Great White Prison," and longed for the company of his down-home philistine cronies.

When the news came that FDR was dead, Truman was sitting inebriated in the office of Sam Rayburn at the House of Representatives, attending an afternoon get-together of the "Board of Education," in which political discussion was lubricated by much bourbon.

Harry S. Truman's role as a puppet of the Harriman gang has been thoroughly documented in numerous published locations. Some of the frankest description has come from Clark Clifford, the Harriman retainer who was one of Truman's chief handlers during his first unelected term in office. During these years, Harriman was on the scene after Truman had made him Secretary of Commerce.

White House Special Counsel Clifford served Harriman and Lovett through an organism called the Monday-Night Club, which was made up of the sub-cabinet officials who actually performed the work of government. "Because I saw more of the President than anyone else in the group, it was agreed that I would be the conduit for our ideas," wrote Clifford much later. Clifford met with Truman for a bourbon cocktail at the end of each day. [Clifford, Counsel to the President]

Later some of these tasks were taken over by Harriman's old friend Dean Acheson, who took over as Secretary of State in 1949. In 1950, said Acheson, he was "working with and on the President to bring Averell back" to the White House. At a December, 1950 summit with Britain's Clement Attlee, Acheson communicated disapproval to Truman by stepping on the President's foot. [Acheson, p. 481] In April 1951 under the guidance of Acheson, Lovett and Gen. Marshall, Truman fired Gen. Douglas MacArthur from his commands in Korea and Japan, despite his sure knowledge that this would terminate his political career, making a 1952 re-election bid out of the question. Truman then wanted Harriman to be his successor as president.

The only memorable deed in Truman's career appears to have been his 1948 re-election campaign. A Truman legend has nevertheless been concocted over the past two decades, as typified by the recent David McCollough biography. The goal of this operation has been the destruction of all rational criteria of political evaluation by glorifying one of the worst presidents and one of the most obvious British puppets in recent history.

### **Harriman Plays Truman Against Molotov**



Averell Harriman, George Marshall, Harry Truman, Dean Acheson

On April 17, four days after Roosevelt's death, Harriman set out from Moscow in a Liberator bomber which had been modified for VIP travel. Harriman proceeded via southern Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Azores. On this trip Harriman literally established a new record for flight time between Moscow and Washington – he made the trip in a little

more than 48 hours. On the morning of April 20, Harriman briefed a staff conference at the State Department. He called for the United States "to eliminate fear in our dealings with the Soviet Union and to show we are determined to maintain our position." [Harriman, p. 449]

One way to present a stronger front to the USSR, Harriman suggested, was quickly to settle any American disputes with Britain and France. For him, this meant selling out to British demands all along the line.

Harriman now had to brief Truman. As one of the most thorough chroniclers of the Cold War put it, "No one did more to shape Truman's views than Harriman himself." [Gaddis, p. 210] Later on April 20, Harriman rushed to the White House for his meeting with Truman. The meeting was attended by Truman, Harriman, Secretary of State Stettinius, and Undersecretary of State Joseph C. Grew. Harriman's briefing pursued a double line of attack. The first was the repeated theme that Stalin was violating the Yalta accords. "Some of Stalin's advisers," Harriman later said he had told Truman, "... had persuaded him that he could do pretty much as he pleased in Eastern Europe without challenge from the United States." [Harriman, Special Envoy, chapter 19]

The other main theme was the need to extort concessions from Moscow by playing on the Soviet need for postwar economic assistance. His own judgment, Harriman said, "was that the Russians needed American help in postwar reconstruction and would not, therefore, wish to break with the United States." Harriman's conclusion was that it was time to get tough with Moscow: "For this reason America could afford to stand firm on important issues without serious risk." Truman chimed in: "The Russians need us more than we need them." Truman caught on fast.

As Harriman later recounted: "Truman listened carefully that first day as Harriman explained that Stalin and his associates were laboring under the mistaken notion that it was a matter of 'life or death' for the United States to increase its exports to Russia. The Ambassador had in mind his talks with Molotov and Mikoyan on postwar assistance to the Soviet Union. They had taken for granted that the United States, fearing a postwar depression, would offer credits to the Soviet Union in order to create jobs at home." [Harriman, p. 448]

"A ridiculous idea," Harriman recalls Truman as having replied. [ibid]

Harriman called attention to Soviet dealings with Romania, Poland, and other nations. He predicted that Stalin would seek to set up police state dictatorships in these countries. A "new barbarian invasion of Europe" was under way. Harriman stressed the need for a tough line on the Polish question. He then asked Truman a hypothetical question which spoke volumes: would Truman be prepared to proceed with plans for a United Nations organization even if the Soviets dropped out of the project? "The truth, Truman replied, was that without Russia there would be no world organization. It was not the answer Harriman hoped to hear; he favored going ahead without the Russians if necessary."

Harriman loitered in Truman's office until Stettinius and Grew had left; he wanted to see the new president alone. Harriman patronized Truman: "'Frankly, one of the reasons that made me rush back to Washington was the fear that you did not understand, as I had seen Roosevelt understand, that Stalin is breaking his agreements. My fear was inspired by the fact that you could not have had time to catch up with all the recent cables. But I must say I am greatly relieved to discover that you have read them all and that we see eye to eye on the situation.' Truman said he was glad that Harriman was going to be available to the American delegation at San Francisco. 'And keep on sending me long messages,' he added." [Harriman, pp. 448-9]

Harriman took his act to the Pentagon, where he warned that Stalin was insisting on a "belt of weak, easily dominated neighboring states," and that this might not be limited to Eastern Europe. "Once the Soviet Union had control of bordering areas, he said, it would probably attempt to penetrate the next layer of adjacent countries. He saw no virtue in waiting; the issue was best fought out as far east as possible." [Harriman, p. 449] He told Grew that the US ought to apply a strict *quid pro quo*, with prompt retaliation for all Soviet misbehavior.

At the State Department on April 21, Grew asked Harriman what leverage the US could use against Moscow. "The Ambassador replied that the Russians needed heavy machinery and machine tools from the United States, together with American know-how in fields such as the chemical industry, coal-mine mechanization, power development and railroad equipment. Besides, the Soviet Union was not as strong as many in the west imagined. The country was still 'fantastically backward.' It had no modern road system, railroad mileage was inadequate, and 90 percent of Moscow's population lived in wretched conditions. In short, he was not much worried about the Soviet Union's taking the offensive in the near future. 'But they will take control of everything they can by bluffing,' he added." [Harriman, p. 450]

Harriman also recommended that when it came to allocating sugar, fats and oils for food purposes, the war depleted USSR should go to the bottom of the list: "...there was no doubt in his mind that the liberated areas of Western Europe should have first priority. While he was satisfied that the Russians had actually needed the Lend- Lease supplies they received



while the war was being fought, shipments could and should be reduced after the end of hostilities.” [Harriman, p. 450] This was a point where Truman would soon prove all too receptive.

The key substantive meeting with Molotov came on April 23. Before Molotov arrived at the White House, Truman met with top US officials. Present were Stettinius, Stimson, Forrestal, Marshall, King, Leahy, Harriman, Bohlen, Assistant Secretary of State James Dunn and General John R. Deane, head of the US military mission in Moscow. Truman began raving that if the USSR disapproved of US plans for the United Nations, “they could go to hell.” For Truman, it was a chance to put on a macho act and prove what a tough Supreme Commander he was after all. He also wanted to show Harriman how well he was learning his lessons. He was now going to administer a diplomatic affront to the Soviet Foreign Minister.

By the time Molotov arrived with Ambassador Gromyko and a translator, Truman was in a manic flight forward. Truman started off by loudly demanding progress on the Polish question. The United States would not recognize the Polish government unless it provided free elections. As for the United Nations, the US would go ahead with founding the world body no matter what else might happen. Moscow had to remember that American economic assistance to Russia would depend on public support in Congress. Molotov started to reply that the Big Three had to treat each other as equals. The Poles, he claimed, had been working against the Red Army. Truman brusquely cut Molotov off, saying that he was not interested in listening to propaganda. He directed Molotov to inform Stalin of the US concern that the Soviets were failing to live up to their agreements. According to Bohlen, Molotov turned ashen-faced and attempted evasive action. Truman went on that he wanted friendship with Russia, but Poland was the sticking point. The US would respect the Yalta accords; the Soviets had to do the same. It could not be a one-way street.



Truman and Molotov

“I have never been talked to like that in my life,” stammered Molotov, a veteran of meetings with Hitler and Ribbentrop.

“Carry out your agreements, and you won’t get talked to like that!” snapped Truman, who then curtly dismissed his guest: “That will be all, Mr. Molotov, I would appreciate it if you transmit my views to Marshal Stalin.” [McCollough, pp. 375-376]

Later Truman gave the following commentary on his performance to Ambassador Davies:

I said...that what we wanted was that you live up to your Yalta Agreement as to Poland. We will live up strictly to ours, and that is exactly [what] I say to you now and there is no use discussing that further. I gave it to him straight ‘one-two to the jaw.’ I let him have it straight.

It was, gloated Truman, “the tough method...Did I do right?” [Gaddis, p. 205]

On the basis of this meeting, Molotov cabled to Stalin that the new American President had thrown Roosevelt’s policies overboard and that the situation in Washington had taken an ominous turn for US- USSR relations. Stalin cabled the following reply to Truman one day later:

Such conditions must be recognized unusual when two governments – those of the United States and Great Britain – beforehand settle with the Polish question in which the Soviet Union is first of all and most of all interested and put the government of the USSR in an unbearable position trying to dictate to it their demands.” [Gaddis, p. 205]

## Witnesses



Walter Lippmann

The shift that began with the Truman-Molotov clash did not escape contemporary observers, although many of these soon clammed up because of the McCarthyite witch-hunts, which actually started under Truman. One who saw clearly enough was columnist Walter Lippmann, a semi-official ideologue of the American position during the war. Lippmann coined the phrases “the American Century” and “the Cold War.” Lippmann was no hero, and many of his best insights were reserved for private correspondence which only became public years later. But we can sample the views of Lippmann and a few others to illustrate how shocking the Harriman-Truman show was at the time.

A recent biographer of Lippmann summed up the columnist’s overall appreciation of the FDR policy in early 1945: “At Yalta FDR thought he had laid the groundwork for a durable peace. Stalin had agreed to enter the war against Japan, to allow free elections in Eastern Europe, and to accept the American formula for a United Nations resting on a great-power veto and spheres of influence. The United States would stand as mediator between the rival imperialisms of Britain and Russia. With its overwhelming economic strength, its predominance in Latin America, its undisputed naval power in the Pacific, its incomparable industrial and military machine, its control over the world’s raw materials, the United States would have nothing to fear from a devastated and war-impoorished Russia. This great scheme would all be codified in May, Roosevelt thought, in San Francisco with the creation of the United Nations.” [Steel, p. 417]

At the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in April, 1945 Walter Lippmann had the chance to observe Harriman in action as a geopolitical provocateur. During these weeks Lippmann became alarmed by Harriman’s activities. Lippmann wrote to Secretary of State designate James Byrnes: “I have been more disturbed about the conduct of our policy than I have thought it expedient during a great conference of this sort to say in print,” Lippmann confided. He judged the conflict between the US and the USSR “not inherent in the nature of things,” but caused by “inexperience and emotional instability in our own delegation.” Lippmann found a “far deeper conflict of interest” between the British and the Soviets than between Washington and Moscow. Nevertheless “we have allowed ourselves to be placed in the position where, instead of being the moderating power which holds the balance, we have become the chief protagonists of the anti-Soviet position.” “None of this would have happened if Roosevelt were still alive,” Lippmann was certain. US-USSR conflict would soon reach far beyond the Polish issue, “if we do not recover our own sense of national interest about this fundamental relationship” with Moscow. [Steel, p. 421]

Harriman took advantage of the San Francisco conference to brief groups of journalists about his estimate of Stalin. In one of these sessions, Harriman intoned that “our objectives and the Kremlin’s objectives are irreconcilable.” At this point Lippmann ostentatiously got up and walked out of the room, accompanied by the prominent radio commentator Raymond Gramm Swing. As Lippmann and Swing stormed out, they hurled at Harriman the epithet “warmonger.” [Gaddis, p. 227]

Lippmann was beside himself. He later called Harriman “a goddam pathological anti-communist” at a White House reception. [Abramson, p. 411]

Swing complained to a group of State Department officials that the Harriman delegation at San Francisco was “engaged in building up a logical record which would give us a clear and unarguable casus belli in a war which never ought to occur and

which clearly could be avoided." [Gaddis, p. 227] (Both Lippmann and Swing, it should be noted, eventually capitulated to the Harriman gang.)

Others were willing to publish similar complaints. Thomas F. Reynolds wrote in the New Republic that the Harriman-dominated delegation took every opportunity "to throw rocks in private at the Soviet hobgoblin." The editors of that magazine blamed the new atmosphere on a "bitter anti-Soviet bloc in the State Department," and demanded that Truman fire these officials. [Gaddis, p. 226] Harriman's Skull & Bones cronies at Time Magazine observed: "A commentary on the state of Big Power relations was Averell Harriman's state of mind when he headed back to Moscow. Harriman, usually a mild fellow, was ready to go to the mat." [Harriman, p. 456]

Alexander Uhl reported to PM, a New York City tabloid of that era, that "a good deal of the wave of 'get tough with Russia' talk that went through the conference circles during the Polish dispute got a lot of its inspiration from Harriman, who was here at the time. Newspapermen who were present at one or more of his select press meetings reported an extraordinary amount of venom in his attitude toward the Russians." [PM, May 28, 1945, see Harriman, p. 457]

Lippmann, in the words of his biographer, "saw a heavy British hand in the State Department's growing pressure for a hard line toward the Soviets and in the dispute over Eastern Europe...The British, seeking to reclaim their sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Lippmann noted that while Churchill wanted noncommunist Poles represented in Warsaw, Stalin wanted Greek communists included in the monarchist regime which the British had imposed on Greece. Lippmann commented that the Greek communist guerillas had the right to be considered "one of the legitimate pillars of the provisional state."

Lippmann called the Polish issue "a British-Russian conflict in which London overruled the British ambassador in Moscow and asked for an interpretation of the Crimean agreement which made the problem insoluble." Endless problems in the colonial sector would result, Lippmann thought, "if we continue to give the impression that from Malta to Singapore and Hong Kong our partnership with the British means underwriting their actions." Lippmann thought that Churchill's penchant for monarchist and reactionary restorations based on "ultra-conservative forces" and "pre-war rightist elements" was hopelessly unworkable. "Moreover," wrote Lippmann, "I raise the question whether a direct challenge to the Soviet power, such as Churchill has made and has tried to persuade us to underwrite, is not expedient." [Steel, p. 422]

The more the US followed the British lead, Lippmann asserted, the more that would "make the Big Five an unworkable thing" at the United Nations. Lippmann hammered on the theme that the US should be a "mediator" among Britain, Russia, and China since there were "no conflicts of vital interests" between the US and the other great powers.

By May 22, 1945 Sumner Welles, the former number two man in the State Department, was openly warning that "in five short weeks since the death of President Roosevelt the policy which he so painstakingly carried out has been changed. Our Government now appears to the Russians as the spearhead of an apparent bloc of the western nations opposed to the Soviet Union." [Gaddis, p. 229]

## **Harriman Terminates Lend-Lease**

Harriman had stressed to Truman the need to use economic warfare against Moscow, "tying our economic assistance directly to our political problems with the Soviet Union." [Gaddis, p. 216] Harriman now got Truman to attack along this line, using the all-important question of lend-lease shipments to the USSR. Lend-Lease was the program by which the US government delivered war materiel to its allies. This was the program launched by FDR's famous "garden hose" speech of late 1940 which had made the US the arsenal of democracy and finally ended the domestic unemployment of the Great Depression.

Lend-Lease was all the more important because there had been no formal commitment by FDR to one of the things Stalin wanted most, a postwar reconstruction loan from the US. In January, 1945 Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau proposed a postwar loan of \$10 billion at 2% interest to allow Russia to purchase American products. The loan was to be repaid over 35 years, partly through exports of strategic raw materials. This would have amounted to a serious program.

FDR, however, was uncertain about the political prospects for getting such a loan approved by Congress. He wanted in any case to wait until after the 1944 election, and at Yalta he appeared to use the postwar loan as a medium-term incentive for better Soviet behavior.

In order to circumvent this difficulty, Washington and Moscow had agreed to use Lend-Lease as the vehicle for shipments to Russia which were in fact destined for postwar reconstruction needs. Even this was technically at variance with the many restrictions which Congress had attached to Lend-Lease, but it had worked as a wartime expedient.

In late April and early May 1945, Harriman targeted Lend-Lease. On May 9, 1945, the day the war in Europe ended, Harriman told Truman that it was time to begin curtailing Lend-Lease shipments to the USSR. Only materiel that Russia

could use against Japan in the promised intervention in the Far East should be sent, Harriman recommended. Truman was enthusiastic, and crowed that a Lend-Lease cutoff was “right down [my] alley.” [Gaddis, p. 218]

Truman issued the necessary orders to the Foreign Economic Administration. Ships carrying Lend-Lease material that were already on the high seas heading for Soviet ports were ordered to turn around and come back to the US. Under FDR the policy had been “when in doubt, give.” Under Truman, that had become “when in doubt, hold.” The effect on the Moscow bureaucracy was stunning. When Harry Hopkins talked to Stalin at the end of the month, the Soviet leader described the Lend-Lease cutoff as “unfortunate and even brutal.” If the Lend-Lease cutoff had been designed to pressure Moscow for political concessions, Stalin warned, the tactic would backfire.

As for the reconstruction loan, Congress finally approved a \$1 billion scaled-down version to be handled by the Export-Import Bank. But with Truman in the White House, even this remained a dead letter.

## **Cold War and Special Relationship**

After the Truman-Molotov clash and the Lend-Lease cutoff, US-USSR relations deteriorated steadily through 1945 into 1946. In February, 1946 George Kennan, who had served as Harriman’s subordinate at the Moscow embassy, sent Washington his famous “long telegram,” which portrayed the Soviet leaders not as Russian nationalists, but rather as communist ideologues determined to pursue confrontation in the international sphere in order to maintain their totalitarian dictatorship at home. The “long telegram” was at once made required reading for thousands of senior US military officers, and became a Bible for cold warriors over the next two decades. Kennan received a special commendation from the State Department. Kennan’s diatribe helped shape the terms of Secretary of State James Byrnes landmark speech of February 28, 1946, which is generally acknowledged to have permanently institutionalized an anti-Soviet US foreign policy. As for Kennan, he reworked his ideas for his famous “Mr. X” treatise on spheres of influence and containment, published in *Foreign Affairs*.

During the summer of 1946, the Cold War line was further consolidated in the Truman Administration by the Clifford-Elsey report, which was compiled by Clifford using ideas and material from Harriman’s two Moscow embassy underlings, Kennan and Charles Bohlen. The heart of this report was the idea that the US should offer assistance to the victims of Soviet communist aggression. This became the Truman Doctrine of March 1947, which announced a US policy of “support to free peoples who are attempting to resist subjugation by armed minorities and outside forces.” [Clifford, p. 136] The occasion was the crisis precipitated by the British when they pulled out of Greece. By now the Cold War had acquired unstoppable momentum.



Churchill at Fulton, MO giving his “iron curtain” speech.

On March 5, 1946, Truman had accompanied Churchill – by now a private citizen – to Fulton, Missouri for the infamous “iron curtain” speech. With the President sitting on the platform, Churchill declaimed:

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in the Soviet sphere and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and increasing measure of control from Moscow.”

Churchill called for military strength, and most of all for a “fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples.” [Gaddis, p. 308] It was the Special Relationship, decked out in Cold War fatigues.

The Cold War and its corollary, an ironclad Anglo-American alliance, were highly unpalatable to some. Left-wing Senators Kilgore, Pepper, and Taylor jointly condemned Churchill for a mentality that could never be freed "from the roll of the drums and the flutter of the flag of the Empire. Mrs. Roosevelt doubted whether the English-speaking peoples could ever get by "without the far greater number of people who are not English-speaking." Churchill was picketed in New York by protestors declaiming: "Don't be a ninny for imperialist Winnie!" [Gaddis, p. 309]

But Churchill and Harriman had been successful: the Cold War was on.

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